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AUTHOR	Dietrich, Katheryn Ann; Kuvlesky, William P.
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ABSTRACT

The third in a series aimed at monitoring changes or stability in attitudes toward race relations of a panel of black, female adults, this report focused on rural rather than metropolitan blacks. Two all-black villages in East Texas were selected for the study area. The original sample numbered 52 females, and only black female interviewers were used. It was concluded that of the 3 orientations toward race relations the only one which showed significant change over the 2-year period of study was the blacks' perception of prejudice directed at them by local whites. The change was progressive, culminating in a markedly lower perception of prejudice by 1972. In contrast, the other racial orientations seemed extremely stable over the longer range. The respondents maintained a lack of consensus in their desires, but were generally less inclined toward interaction with whites the less formal the context of social interaction. The blacks continued to be generally optimistic in their evaluations of the possibility for racial integration. It was recommended that more longitudinal research of this kind on a variety of black population types be conducted. Related documents are ED 053 828 and ED 067 185. (HBC)

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CHANGES IN THE ATTITUDES TOWARD RACE RELATIONS OF SOUTHERN RURAL BLACKS: ANALYSIS OF A PANEL OF VILLAGE WOMEN, 1970-1972*

by

Katheryn Ann Dietrich
Texas A&M University

and

William P. Kuvlesky
Prairie View A&M College
Texas A&M University

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Introduction

This is the third in a series of reports[1] aimed at monitoring changes or stability in attitudes toward race relations of a panel of black, female adults. The black respondents resided in an economically depressed area of rural East Texas, an area culturally akin to the "Deep South." They were interviewed every year for the last three years (1970 through 1972), regarding several dimensions of racial attitudes: (1) their perception of the racial prejudice that was directed at them by local whites; (2) their desires for racial integration; (3) their perception of the possibility for racial integration in their local area.

As mentioned in our previous reports, we think our study has value, because it focuses on the much neglected rural, rather than metropolitan, black and because it appears to be among the first systematic attempts to tap dynamics in blacks' racial attitudes. Our longitudinal study is very timely, as the first contact of respondents immediately preceded and the last two immediately followed integration of public schools in the study area.

Past Research

Although change in the attitudes of blacks has been analyzed (see the postscript to Gary Marx's 1964 survey, Marx, 1969), it has been from different one-point-in-time studies which incorporated different questions and different sample composition. Moreover, because most studies have dealt with metropolitan blacks, there is little basis for even this kind of expost facto analysis in reference to blacks in the rural South. However, it is significant that among the metropolitan blacks, at least, a general constancy in several dimensions of blacks' racial attitudes seems to have occurred over a period of our history characterized by change in race relations--1964 to 1968. The surveys during this period show unrelenting attitudes among the black majority of nonmilitancy, optimism about the future of race relations, support for integration, rejection of separatism, and a high degree of racial tolerance among blacks as shown in social-distance patterns and attitudes toward whites. (See a synthesis of these surveys in Marx, 1969.)

Even though Marx's study suggests this moderate stance characterizes most metropolitan blacks, regardless of region, age, sex and social class, antiwhite attitudes have been found to be more extreme among black

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[1]See Kuvlesky and Dietrich (1972) and Kuvlesky and Cannon (1971).

Southerners (Marx, 1969:187; Williams, 1964:274), females (Williams, 1964:267), the economically depressed and poorer educated (Marx, 1969: 188). Differences by rural, small-town, and metropolitan residence have also been observed in our own data (Kuvlesky, Warren, and Ragland, 1972), with the rural blacks showing substantially lower desires than the others for racial integration.

It is also important to bear in mind differences in the various dimensions of racial attitude, for they are not necessarily highly correlated. For example, the groups noted above as most likely to hold antiwhite attitudes appear the least likely to be militant (Marx, 1969). In addition, antiwhite prejudice itself has several dimensions. Desire for integration is a manifestation of what Williams (1964:28) terms affective prejudice (attraction or aversion), and it seems to vary greatly by social context, decreasing the higher the degree of informality that would be involved in black-white interaction (Kuvlesky, Warren, Ragland, 1972).

On the other hand, the blacks' perception of negative prejudice directed toward them by whites might be indicative--if prejudice breeds counter-prejudice as Williams (1964) proposes--of cognitive prejudice (stereotyping) toward whites by blacks, themselves. Supporting this hypothesis is the finding by Brooks and Hawley (1972) that whites and blacks seem to perceive the others' racial prejudice, stereotyping, and ethnocentrism to be greater than it actually is.

An additional type of prejudice, evaluative, refers to normative standards regarding race relations—for example, "attitudes toward questions of public policy concerning racial minorities" (Williams, 1964:29). Our measure, perception of the possibility for racial integration, would seem to be associated with this measure--a reflection of what the blacks think possibilities for integration should be.[2]

The Study Area

Two all-black villages in a predominantly rural[3] county of East Texas were selected for the study area. The county was adjacent to the Louisiana border and about 60 miles from the nearest metropolitan center. About one-fourth of the county's inhabitants were black. Socioeconomic discrepancies between the blacks and whites of the county were substantial.

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[2]See Kuvlesky and Cannon (1971) and Kuvlesky, Warren, and Ragland (1972) for a discussion of the relationship of our racial orientation variables to these types of prejudice.

[3]The 1970 census shows 75 percent of the county's population living in places of 2500 or less inhabitants.

The villages appeared rather typical of many black, rural settlements in East Texas. Each had a population of about 100, and the homes were sparsely distributed on a network of dirt roads. Both were relatively isolated from white traffic. Most of the houses in the communities were very small, dilapidated frame structures, suggesting a conspicuously lower level of living than that generally found among whites in the county.

Procedures of Data Collection

The black female respondents were first contacted in the early summer of 1970, immediately following the closing of school for the summer. The initial data were collected as part of a larger study designed to comprehensively investigate patterns of living in disadvantaged families. In accordance with the guidelines set forth in the larger study, only the main female homemakers of families in the study area who met the following criteria were included in the sample: (1) at least one child under 18 years of age resided in the home; (2) the female homemaker normally resided in the home; (3) the female homemaker mainly responsible for caring for the home was under 65 years of age and, unless she was the mother of one or more of the children living in home, under 18. About half of the black families in the study area met these criteria, and of those qualifying, all but one (less than 1%) was interviewed. The original sample numbered 52 black females.

In the early summer of 1971 and 1972, an attempt was made to reinterview all of these rural black homemakers about their attitudes toward race relations. Only black female interviewers were used in all three contacts. All but four of the respondents were interviewed again in 1971; another four could not be reinterviewed in 1972. There were no refusals. The reasons for the loss of the eight respondents were because they had moved from the local area, death, or illness. These eight have been excluded from this analysis. The exclusion was not found to change the 1970 and 1971 aggregate distribution of responses appreciably.

In 1970, the mean and median incomes of the families in the rural sample were about $1,000 higher than those of all blacks in the county. (A factor probably largely due to the exclusion of the elderly from our sample.) However, according to a poverty index by which income is evaluated in relation to family size, age of family members, and a consumer price index for the area of study, almost three-fourths of the respondents' families were judged to be disadvantaged or marginal. About a third of the families were female-headed (no husband). In the two-parent families, almost all of the husbands and about half of the homemakers were employed. Both usually worked as semiskilled or unskilled laborers in the white-owned and managed poultry and lumber industries of the area.

In the 1970 survey, most of the homemakers were between 30 and 49 years of age, and most had not completed high school. Almost all were born locally (i.e., within 50 miles of their present home) and had lived over half of their lives in rural areas. Few had moved their place of residence in the past five years.

In addition to the rural, Southern nature of the black sample, the sex and ages of the respondents are probably important attributes influencing their attitudes toward race relations. Black females have been found to be more prejudiced (Williams, 1964:269) yet less militant (Marx, 1969:54) than black males. Both antiwhite attitudes and militancy has been shown to be greater among the young and middle-aged blacks than among the elderly (Marx, 1969:54). If findings of the Cornell reports (1948 through 1956; see Williams, 1964) are still viable, these black females from the rural South may be among the most prejudiced blacks in the nation.

Perception of Prejudice

To elicit the black respondents' perception of whether anti-black prejudice was directed at them by local whites, they were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

(1) "White people around here judge Negroes by the worst type of Negroes";
(2) "White people around here don't like to be around Negroes";
(3) "White people around here don't like white kids to play with Negro kids";
(4) "White people around here never let you forget they are white and you are Negro";
(5) "White people around here think they are cleaner than Negroes."

Alternative responses were: "strongly agree"; "tend to agree"; "tend to disagree"; "strongly disagree." These responses were weighted 4 through 1, respectively, and the weighted responses for all the items were summed to produce a scale of "perceived prejudice." The scalability of the items was examined previously by Kuvlesky, Warren, and Ragland (1972) and found to be acceptable. A high reliability coefficient ($\alpha = .91$[4]) was reported for the 1970 sample.

As shown in Table 1, the blacks perception of prejudice directed at them by local whites appears to have decreased each year, culminating in substantially lower scores in 1972 as compared to 1970. Whereas in 1970 three-fourths of the blacks' scores were concentrated in the upper-half of the scale (indicating that they answered most of the perceived prejudice items positively), by 1972 the majority of scores fell in the

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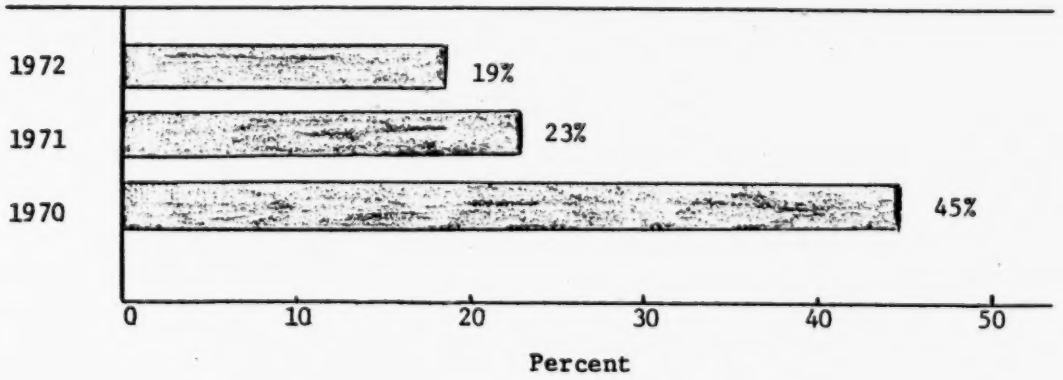
[4]See Kuvlesky, Warren, and Ragland (1972) and Bohrnstedt (1969) for a discussion of this statistic.

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of "Perceived Prejudice" Total Scores by Year of Contact.

		PP Score	Spring, 1970 (N=44)	Spring, 1971 (N=44)	Spring, 1972 (N=44)
			Percent		
Generally did not perceive prejudice	Low	5 (-)	2	0	2
		6	2	0	0
		7	(8) 0	(2) 0	(11) 0
		8	4	2	9
	Mod. Low	9	2	7	14
		10	7	5	7
		11	(18) 0	(28) 2	(44) 9
		12	9	14	14
Generally perceived prejudice	Mod. High	13	2	11	5
		14	2	5	7
		15	(29) 16	(47) 20	(26) 7
		16	9	11	7
	High	17	23	9	9
		18	2	2	4
		19	(45) 6	(23) 7	(19) 4
		20 (+)	14	5	2
		TOTAL	100	100	100
		MEAN	14.91	14.30	12.73

Figure 1. Respondents Showing a High Perception of Prejudice Directed at Them.



lower half of the scale (answers to most of the questions were negative).

Figure 1 illustrates the dramatic decrease which occurred at the "high" end of the scale, a decrease of about half between 1970 and 1972. Almost all of this decrease took place between the first and second contacts, however. The last year of the study (from the spring of 1971 to the spring of 1972) primarily witnessed aggregate movement from the high to the lower end of the moderate range.

Longitudinal change for each of the scale items was also examined to determine if any particular item(s) may have accounted for most of the decrease in total scale scores. The substantial decrease in affirmative response was found to have occurred for each of the items.

Desires for Racial Integration or Segregation

As mentioned previously, the degree of formality or informality of social relations has been found to influence attitudes regarding interracial interaction (Williams, 1964:283, 297-298). Consequently, the questions regarding desires for integration or segregation focused on a variety of social contexts, covering a range of degree of formality-informality. Specifically, the blacks were asked about their preference for interaction with "Negroes only" or "Negroes and whites" in reference to: (1) going to church; (2) their children attending school; (3) their children's playmates outside of school; (4) close, personal friendships; (5) ownership of the stores they patronized. Responses to each of the items were weighted (Negroes only = 1; Negroes and whites = 2) and summed. Kuvlesky and Warren report a reliability coefficient (α) of .85 for the 1970 responses to this scale.

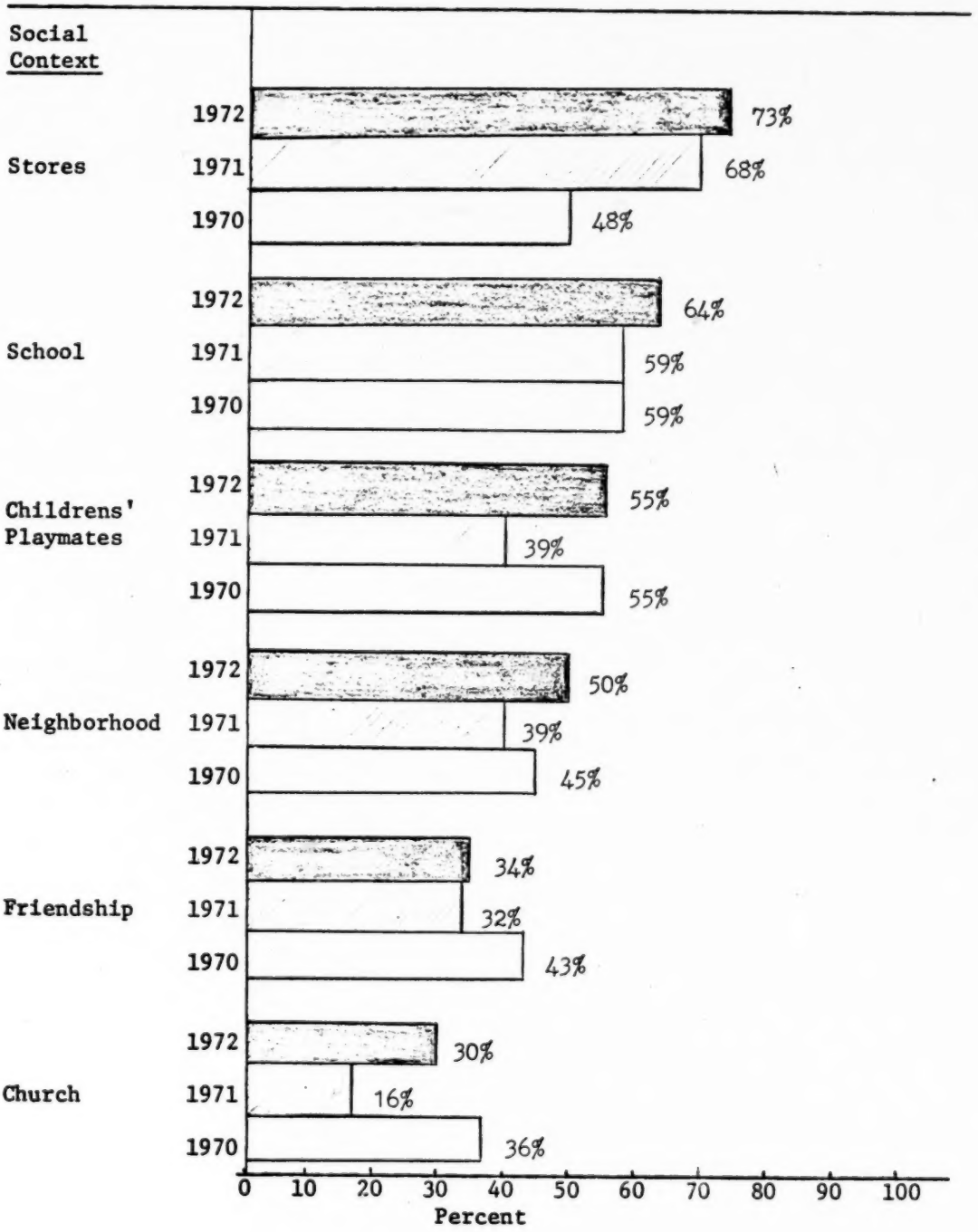
Change in the blacks' desires for integration did not occur in a consistent direction, as did change in perception of prejudice. Table 2 shows the respondents somewhat polarized in their desires in 1970; 1971 witnessed a movement toward the middle but with a general proclivity for segregation; and 1971 witnessed an increase in desire for integration. Although by 1972 the polarization of responses was not as extreme as in 1970, there was still a considerable lack of consensus among the respondents. The net change between 1970 and 1972 was only a slight, and probably insignificant, increase in desire for integration.

Figure 2 provides a comparison of change in preference for racial integration by each of the social contexts that were specified. The only cumulative increase over the three contacts in desired integration was in reference to buying from white as well as black merchants. Comparing only the 1970 and 1972 differences by social contact, the only marked increase was also in reference to merchants. The ordering of desire for integration by social context changed only between the first

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of "Desire for Integration" Total Scores by Year of Contact.

	DI Score	Spring, 1970 (N=44)	Spring, 1971 (N=44)	Spring, 1972 (N=44)
		Percent	Percent	Percent
Desired Segregation In Most	6 (-)	30	21	18
	7	(48) 9	(55) 11	(45) 9
	8	9	23	18
	9	9	18	16
Desired Integration In Most	10	9	7	9
	11	(43) 9	(27) 9	(39) 3
	12 (+)	25	11	27
	TOTAL	100	100	100
	MEAN	8.86	8.52	9.05

Figure 2. Respondents Preferring Racial Integration



two contacts, where merchants replaced schools as the most preferred context for racial integration. Throughout the longitudinal study, church remained the least desired context.

Perception of the Possibility for Racial Integration

To elicit the black respondents perception of the possibility for racial integration in their local area, they were asked to indicate whether they thought it was "possible" or "not possible" now where they lived for Negroes and whites to interact in five of the six social contexts delineated above. The context of store ownership was excluded from this instrument, because the researchers knew that the blacks of these communities frequently shopped at white owned stores. Responses to the question regarding schools has been deleted from the perceived integration scale, because the schools were scheduled to be integrated when opened in the fall, and the respondents unanimously reported that it was possible for their children to attend school with white children. Responses to the remaining four items were weighted (possible = 2; not possible = 1) and summed to produce the perceived possibility of integration scale.

As shown in Table 3, there appears to have been a progressive but slight decrease over the two years in the black respondents' perception of the possibility for racial integration where they lived. Although the trend is of questionable significance, it is interesting that the number of respondents taking the most extreme negative position--i.e., claiming no possibility for integration in any of the social contexts mentioned--increased from 0 to 2 by 1972. Perhaps these decreases forecast an awakening to reality taking place among some respondents as blacks begin to actually test a range of opportunities for integration. Most significant, however, is the fact that the scale scores for all three contacts were positively skewed, indicating that integration generally continued to be perceived as possible in most of the social contexts.

Examined in Figure 3 is change in the perception of the possibility for racial integration in reference to each of the social contexts. Except in reference to church, change was slight and the net 1970-1972 difference, negligible. A significant decrease appeared in the perceived possibility of going to church with whites; however this occurred between the first two contacts.

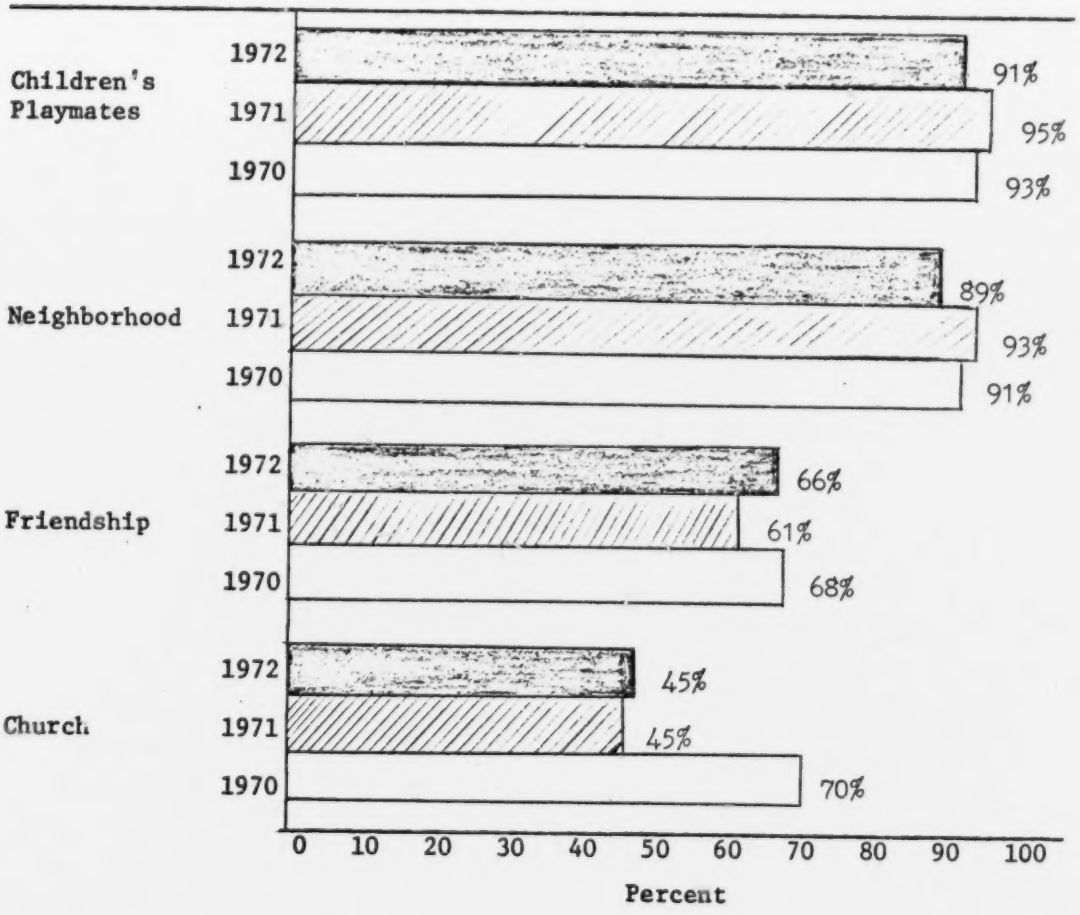
Desire vs. Opportunity for Integration

An interesting finding of our previous analyses is that the proportion of black respondents who perceived racial integration as possible exceeded the proportion desiring it in reference to every social context that was specified. It seems especially significant that

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of "Perceived Possibility for Integration" Total Scores by Year of Contact.

	PPI Score		Spring, 1970 (N=44)		Spring, 1971 (N=44)		Spring, 1972 (N=44)
					Percent		
Low Possibility	4		0		0		4
	5	(7)	7	(5)	5	(9)	5
Moderate	6		13		27		25
High Possibility	7		23		32		25
	8	(80)	57	(68)	36	(66)	41
	TOTAL		100		100		100
	Mean		7.30		7.00		6.93

Figure 3. Respondents Perceiving Racial Integration as Possible



these discrepancies continued to occur at every time of contact and were always substantial (Table 4).

The discrepancy between desired and perceived possibility for integration appears to have been greater in 1971 than in either 1970 or 1972. Only responses in reference to school and church showed even moderate net change (a decrease) between 1970 and 1972.

Referring back to Figures 2 and 3, desire for racial integration appears the more dynamic of the two variables. Thus, it is change in this variable which primarily accounts for the change in the discrepancies between desired and perceived possibility for integration.

Summary of Findings

Of the three orientations toward race relations, the only one which showed significant change over the two-year period of study was the blacks' perception of prejudice directed at them by local whites (Tables 5 and 6). The change was progressive, culminating in a markedly lower perception of prejudice by 1972.

In contrast, the other racial orientations seemed extremely stable over the longer range, at least. Except for a short period of fluctuation which seemed to occur in the blacks' initial adjustment to concomitants of school integration (although not the situation of school integration, itself), little change of consequence was noted in the blacks' desires for integration. The respondents maintained a lack of consensus in their desires, but were generally less inclined toward interaction with whites the less formal the context of social interaction. The blacks continued to be generally optimistic in their evaluations of the possibility for racial integration. In regard to the relationships between the two variables, perceived opportunity for integration remained much greater than the desire for it, regardless of social context.

Obviously, it can be concluded that perception of racial prejudice, because it is decreasing rapidly while all else remains stable, operates independently from the other orientations toward interracial interaction.

Discussion

Obviously, our ability to generalize from these findings with any degree of certainty is severely restricted by our small, relatively homogeneous panel and by the lack of other directly relevant findings on the dynamics of Southern blacks' attitudes toward race relations. There is a compelling need for more longitudinal research of this kind on a variety of black population types.

Table 4. Aggregate Differences in the Perceived Possibility for Integration and Desire for Integration, by Social Context and Year of Contact

Social Context	1970		1971		1972	
	Proportionate Difference	Direction of Difference	Proportionate Difference	Direction of Difference	Proportionate Difference	Direction of Difference
Neighborhood	46	PI>DI	54	PI>DI	39	PI>DI
Children	38	PI>DI	56	PI>DI	36	PI>DI
Friendship	25	PI>DI	29	PI>DI	32	PI>DI
School	41	PI>DI	41	PI>DI	29	PI>DI
Church	34	PI>DI	29	PI>DI	15	PI>DI

Table 5. Summary of Mean Race Relations Orientation Scale Scores Over 2 Year Period, 1970-1972.

	PP	DI	PPI
	Mean Scores		
1970	14.9	8.8	7.3
1971	14.3	8.6	7.0
1972	12.7	9.1	6.9
70-72 Difference	-2.2	+.3	-.4
Possible Score Range:	5-20	6-12*	4-8*

*The higher the score the more racial integration is desired and the more integration is perceived as possible.

Table 6. Summary of Change in Negative Orientations of Race Relations Over 2 Year Period: 1970-1972.

Contacts	Generally Perceived Prejudice 1/	Generally Desired Racial Segregation 2/	Generally Saw Integration as Not Possible 3/
	Percent of Respondents		
1970	74	48	7
1971	70	55	5
1972	45	45	9
70-72 Difference	-29	- 3	+2

1/ PP Scores of 13-20 (see Table 1)

2/ DI Scores of 10-12 (see Table 2)

3/ PPI Scores of 7-8 (see Table 3)

One might speculate from our findings that a change in at least cognitive prejudice is taking place in the rural South. Perhaps the Southern rural blacks are moving toward the moderate stance which Marx and others (Marx, 1969) have observed in the metropolitan North. Unfortunately, differences in measures and in the attitudinal dimensions that are being investigated preclude direct comparison of our findings with these previous reports. Only through additional, systematic and broader-based research can the validity of the foregoing propositions be ascertained.

The change observed in perception of prejudice is intriguing because "attitudes that may be a deep-lying part of an individual's personality, such as orientations to out-group. . . under normal conditions are not likely to change markedly from year to year" (Marx, 1969:229). While school integration and other changes which may have accompanied it might have been a potent enough force to provoke alteration in this attitude, it is confounding that concomitant change did not occur in the other two orientations toward race relations. What factor(s) could have produced changes in perception of prejudice and yet not influence changes in desire and perception of possibility for integration?

The differential behavior of these variables over time further emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between various types of prejudice, if the three orientations we studied do in fact reflect these different types. As noted previously, perception of prejudice may reflect cognitive prejudice; desire for integration, affective prejudice; and perception of the possibility for integration, normative prejudice. Past research has not always clearly distinguished among these types and has tended to presume that they were highly intercorrelated. Our findings suggest that:

(1) cognitive prejudice varies independently of other types of prejudice;
(2) cognitive prejudice directed toward whites by blacks may be decreasing rapidly, while other types of prejudice remain stable.

In reference to the latter, it should be pointed out that in our initial survey (1970) cognitive prejudice was more extreme than the other two types.

Furthermore, if cognitive prejudice among blacks and whites is reciprocal, as Williams postulates, the decrease of perceived prejudice among these blacks may be reflecting a sharp decline in cognitive prejudice among the local white people. On the other hand, the failure for perception of opportunity for integration to increase over the two year period--especially given the fact that school integration in the area was accomplished by court order during the period of study--would reflect that such legal forces do not have a quick impact on the normative separatist structures that are traditional in this region. As a consequence, actual assimilation and diffuse, broad integration of

racial populations does not appear to be taking place in these and similar communities throughout the "Deep South."

We believe that these assertions, speculations, and suggestions offer fertile ground for stimulating and socially relevant research. While race relations is a topic of high social relevance and public priority in our society today, we see no immediate improvement in the lack of research attention being given to it by sociologists and rural sociologists, in particular. A. Lee Coleman (1965) pointed to this need for research a long time ago, and we have continued to echo him strongly since the fall of 1971. Not only has little additional research by rural sociologists appeared, few have even bothered to challenge or react to our findings and the risky generalizations and implications we have inferred from them. Why? We don't know the answer for sure but have developed a set of speculations in a paper given to the Texas Academy of Science last year (Kuvlesky and Taft, 1972).*

*This paper will be sent upon request.

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